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# Organizational Trust As a Moderator of the Relationship between Burnout and Intentions to Quit

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Organizational Trust As a Moderator of the Relationship between Burnout and  
Intentions to Quit

By

Glenn Trussell

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

In

Industrial-Organizational Psychology

Minnesota State University, Mankato

Mankato, Minnesota

May, 2015

Organizational Trust As a Moderator of the Relationship between Burnout and Intentions to Quit

Glenn Trussell

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Glenn E. Trussell

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### Abstract

This research explores an individual's trust in his or her organization and an individual's perceptions of the level of organizational trust he or she receives as potential moderators of the relationship between burnout and intentions to quit. Reciprocal trust, as defined by high levels of both individual and perceived organizational trust, was also examined as a potential moderator. Research was conducted in partnership with a regional consulting firm. Survey data was collected through MechanicalTurk. A total of 2,922 participants from eighteen business sectors across the United States and Canada were represented. Level of trust was shown to significantly impact intentions to quit as well as burnout. An individual's trust in his or her organization and perceived organizational trust both moderated the relationship between exhaustion and intentions to quit. Reciprocal trust moderated the relationship between disengagement and intentions to quit. Limitations and future directions are discussed.

### Organizational Trust As a Moderator of the Relationship between Burnout and Intentions to Quit

A common issue in organizations today is dealing with employee turnover. In the United States an average of 2.2% of the total private industry workforce had quit their jobs during the month of January, 2015. In professional and business services this average was 2.8% (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). Although the percentage of employees quitting may seem small, turnover has costly ramifications for organizations. It is estimated that an organization loses up to \$100,000 for every managerial and other exempt employee leaving the company. Considering both direct and indirect costs, exempt employee turnover can range from a minimum of one year's pay and benefits to two year's pay and benefits (Ramlall, 2004). In addition to the direct financial costs incurred, the indirect costs to an organization include the loss of valuable knowledge and experience with employee turnover. Employees may voluntarily turnover for any number of reasons, including: advancement opportunities, management issues, work-life balance complaints, and occupational stress. According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (1999) (NIOSH), increased employee turnover may be a sign of employee occupational stress.

The relationship between occupational stress and employee intentions to quit is fairly well researched. Geurts, Schaufeli and De Jonge (1998) noted a strong positive relationship between burnout and intentions to quit (ITQ) among health-care professionals. Researchers have contended that burnout is not limited to human service professions (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001). In fact, monitoring stress as a broad organizational issue has been suggested to be a potentially valuable tool of employee retention efforts (Allisey, Noblet, Lamontagne, & Houdmont, 2014). The World Health Organization (2015) defines work-related stress as a response to the mismatch between an individual's knowledge and abilities and the work demands placed upon them by the job. NIOSH presents a model of job stress whereby

stressful job conditions interact with individual and situational factors to predict outcomes. As the examination of individual and situational factors is beyond the scope of this paper, I shall examine an outcome of occupational stress: burnout.

Burnout is a psychological response to chronic occupational stress. Burnout as an outcome of stress is often perceived as a general malaise. Employees feel tired, disengaged and inadequate. Originally conceived as a three-factor construct, burnout's key dimensions are: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and feelings of reduced self-accomplishment (Maslach, 1982). There has been some concern in prior research regarding the three-factor structure of Maslach's burnout; some current research models instead support a two-factor structure of exhaustion and disengagement (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001; Halbesleben & Demerouti, 2007). It is this two-factor model of burnout that shall be used for the remainder of this research. Burnout has been linked to a number of negative outcomes, including: absenteeism, low productivity, and decreased job satisfaction (Angerer, 2003; Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004). Unfortunately, employee burnout is a topic many organizations are reluctant to address (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). Burnout is also a concern with regards to turnover and turnover intentions. Drake and Yadama (1996) demonstrated direct main effects between the emotional exhaustion component of burnout and intentions to quit (ITQ) while depersonalization indirectly impacted ITQ through emotional exhaustion.

Fortunately, an employee's intentions to quit and whether that employee actually quits are two separate issues. However, a strong relationship exists between behavioral intentions to quit and actual turnover. A behavioral intention to quit is an individual's stated desire to end their current employment. Steel and Ovalle (1984) identified a corrected coefficient of  $r=.50$  between the two variables in their meta-analysis. Given this robust relationship, an employee

expressing or exhibiting behavioral intentions to quit should be an alarming sign pointing to a critical issue within the employee-employer relationship.

Trust has long been considered to be a critical component of any successful relationship. With the growing interdependency between employees with the rise of teams, the increasing specialization of jobs, and the increasing diversity of the workforce, trust has also become a salient topic for organizational research. In an organizational setting, trust is an important concern in many types of relationships including relationships between co-workers, between an employee and his or her supervisor, and between employees and top management. This study will focus on trust between individuals and the organization and perceived levels of trust received from the organization. Past research has shown a relationship between trust and employee turnover (Batchelor, 2013; Davis, Schoorman, Mayer, & Tan, 2000). This paper shall attempt to further expand upon this research by also considering the directionality or mutuality of trust.

### **Models of Trust**

Researchers have alluded to the difficulty in researching trust as a construct due to the difficulty in defining its nature. Interpersonal trust may be defined as “an expectancy held by an individual or a group that the word, promise, verbal or written statement of another individual or group can be relied upon (Rotter, 1967, p. 651)”. Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995) defined trust as “the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party (p. 712)”. That definition holds important connotations for the nature of organizational trust in that it specifies there be an interdependency necessary within the relationship for trust to exist. Given this definition, trust may be



unidirectional or bidirectional; a subordinate may trust their manager but not receive trust in return. The definition provided by Mayer et al (1995) shall be used for the remainder of this research as it considers the dyadic nature of trust within organizations. This reciprocal trust shall be further expanded upon later in this paper.

**Main Effect vs. Moderator.** Trust research can be viewed primarily in two different models with trust acting as a main effect or a moderator. In the first model, trust acts directly on individual and organizational outcomes. In the second model, trust serves as a moderator between individual or organizational variables and outcomes by strengthening or weakening the relationship. Research into trust has explored both of these models; although trust as a main effect is the more commonly researched model, with over 90% of empirical research hypothesizing direct main effects (Dirks & Ferrin, 2001).

The primary consideration of trust in the literature has been that of an active, independent variable, capable of driving both positive and negative outcomes. However, trust may act as a facilitator or aid to allow positive or negative outcomes to occur as a result of another independent variable. For the purposes of this research, organizational trust shall be viewed uniquely as both a main effect and a moderator with hypotheses reflecting both of these models.

**Disposition vs. State.** An individual may be predisposed toward or against trusting others (Rotter, 1967). Certainly, one has met the individual who blindly trusts anything compared to the ever-doubting skeptic. This disposition impacts how readily an individual may exhibit individual or organizational trust. Evidence exists for propensity to trust having a basis in ones' culture as well as their life experiences (Farris, Senner, & Butterfield, 1973; Zia & Khan, 2014). Many variables play a role in whether an individual is naturally more trusting, such as: religion, birth order among siblings, and socio-economic status (Rotter, 1967).

As with many psychological constructs, trust may be viewed as stable over time or situationally flexible depending on how it is operationally defined. However, using disposition to trust as a predictor of trust has led to mixed results in research (McKnight, Cummings, & Chervany, 1998). Johnson-George and Swap (1982) argue that dispositional trust is not predictive of an individual's trust in another. It is for this reason that trust shall be viewed as a psychological state, rather than a disposition for the remainder of this research.

### **Antecedents of Trust**

If individuals are not necessarily predisposed to trust, then it is important to identify why or how trust develops. Although this paper does not focus on developing trust, it is important to understand the antecedents of trust. Mishra and Morrissey (1990) found four key components in the development of trust: open communication, giving employees more decision-making abilities, dissemination of critical information, and honest sharing of perceptions and feelings. Work group cohesion, which is related to open communication and honest sharing, was also shown to be positively related to organizational trust (Gilbert & Tang, 1998).

Certain demographic variables such as age, gender, marital status, socioeconomic status, and religious affiliation have been shown to impact levels of organizational trust (Gilbert & Tang, 1998; Jeanquart-Barone & Sekaran, 1994; Rotter, 1967). These demographic variables may impact levels of trust over time as life-events occur for the individual. One's own culture, whether it be collectivistic or individualistic impacts their levels of organizational trust, as well (Zia & Khan, 2014). Additionally, employees' perceptions about their organization's corporate social responsibility were positively related to organizational trust (Hansen, Dunford, Boss, Boss, & Angermeier, 2011). Interestingly, Yu and Choi (2014) found that organizational trust partially mediates the relationship between corporate social responsibility practices and

employee well-being, as well as organizational performance; once again pointing to the importance of trust and its potential as a powerful lever for organizations.

A meta-analysis identified leadership style and certain management practices as important antecedents of trust. The strongest relationship with trust came from transformational leadership. Ensuring fair procedures and outcomes along with interactional processes and offering organizational support were found to be important steps for building organizational trust, as well (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). A transformational leader who ensures procedural and distributive justice is likely to generate organizational trust in subordinates by involving them in business operations while remaining fair. These findings corroborate Mishra and Morrissey's (1990) findings of open communication and increasing employee decision-making ability. Increasing employee decision-making ability ties back in with the reciprocal nature of trust in that showing trust in your employees is likely to generate employee trust in their managers and the organization as a whole.

### **Outcomes of Trust**

Engendering organizational trust is important given the numerous positive individual and organizational outcomes. Trust outcomes are varied and numerous in nature, affecting both individuals and the organization. Trust has been shown to be positively related to job satisfaction, perceptions of fair compensation, work engagement, and individual performance (Dirks & Ferrin, 2001; Fabian, Ike, & Alma, 2014; Velez & Strom, 2012). Organizational trust was found to be positively related to a sense of satisfaction and negatively related to intentions to quit within U.S. government employees (Batchelor, 2013). It is also positively related to increased organizational citizenship behaviors (Altuntas & Baykal, 2010; Hansen et al., 2011; McAllister, 1995; Petrella, 2013). Additionally, employee trust was also positively related to

organizational commitment and decreased turnover intentions (Fruend, 2014; Hansen et al., 2011).

The benefits of trust are not isolated to one industry, either. Research into trust has shown positive benefits for organizations across numerous industries. In the restaurant industry, trust in general manager predicted sales, profits, and employee turnover (Davis et al., 2000). NCAA basketball players' trust in their coach has been shown to be positively related to team performance (Dirks, 2000). A study of elementary school teachers found that collegial trust positively predicted organizational citizenship behaviors (McKenzie, 2011). In healthcare, organizational trust has been shown to be positively related to overall hospital patient satisfaction and executives' tenure (Velez & Strom, 2012).

**Reciprocal Trust.** As noted earlier, trust may be unidirectional or bidirectional in nature. Employees may feel that the organization trusts them but they do not reciprocate that feeling. Imagine the employee feelings during downsizing; the organization trusts the employees to continue their work but the employees feel a lack of trust due to the layoffs. The corollary, where employees trust their organization but the organization does not return that trust, is also possible. This situation may be seen in an organization with strict and omnipresent employee monitoring.

Brower, Lester, Korsgaard, and Dineen (2009) explored dyadic trust in an organizational setting and discovered positive benefits in subordinates trusting their managers and managers trusting their subordinates. Mutual trust failed to show significant outcomes on employees' intentions to quit, however. It was noted that the low correlation between trust in manager and trust in subordinate may be indicative of the rarity of mutual trust within organizations, suggesting that measuring this elusive form of trust may be difficult. Korsgaard, Brower, and

Lester (2014) noted that in situations of asymmetrical trust, environments where the levels of trust among members of the relationship are different, positive outcomes are diminished.

Not only is trust dyadic in nature but it is also reciprocal. Indeed, managers' trust in subordinates was positively related to the willingness of managers to give employees decision-making abilities (Spreitzer & Mishra, 1999). When managers trust lower echelon employees and give them decision-making abilities, employees develop more trust in their organization. This point once again alludes to the reciprocal nature of trust and trust-building. However, Geurts et al. (1998) suggested that employee withdrawal may result when expectations of reciprocity are not present. Unfortunately, Schoorman et al. (2007) suggested that the reciprocal nature of trust has not been examined adequately in research and that empirical studies are rare. Brower et al. (2009) called for more research on mutual trust, stating "...although there is theoretical appeal to its benefits, empirical support is scant (pg. 342)."

### **Present Study**

The nature of the relationship between occupational burnout and intentions to quit is fairly well researched and documented. Previous trust research has focused primarily on trust as a main effect with it directly impacting outcomes. However, the interplay with which trust impacts the nature of the relationship between burnout and ITQ is less clear. It is this paper's intention to clarify the interaction between trust, burnout, and intentions to quit. Given the information presented regarding the relationships between these three variables, I posit the following hypotheses:

H1: Individual trust and organizational trust will be negatively correlated with intentions to quit.

H2: Individual trust and organizational trust will be negatively correlated with burnout.

H3: Burnout will be positively correlated with intentions to quit.

H4a: Individual trust will moderate the relationship between burnout and intentions to quit such that the positive relationship between burnout and intentions to quit will be stronger among those low in individual trust than among those high in individual trust.

H4b: Organizational trust will moderate the relationship between burnout and intentions to quit, such that individuals high in trust will exhibit lower intentions to quit than individuals lower in trust.

H5: Reciprocal trust will moderate the relationship between burnout and intentions to quit.

Employees who experience reciprocal trust, as demonstrated by high levels of both individual trust and organizational trust, will exhibit a weak positive relationship between burnout and intention to quit while individuals with only unidirectional trust (either individual or organizational) will exhibit a stronger positive relationship between burnout and intention to quit. Finally, individuals who have neither individual nor organizational trust will exhibit the strongest positive relationship between burnout and intentions to quit. See Figure 1 for a graphical representation of this hypothesized relationship.

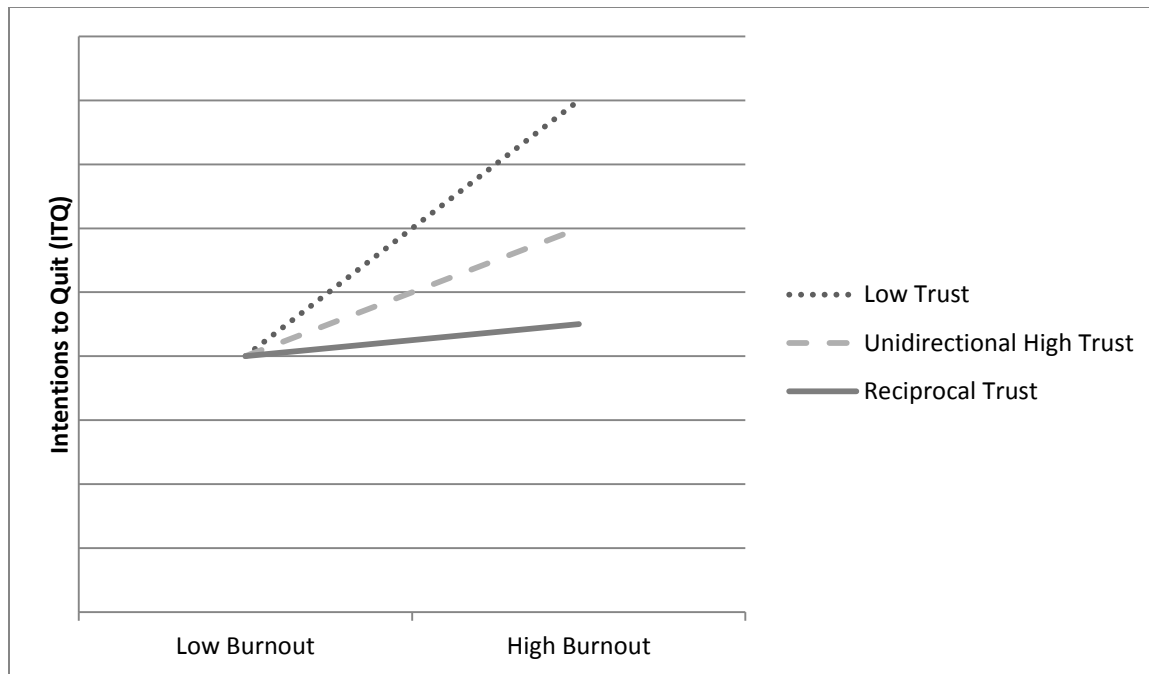


Figure 1. Hypothesized interaction between reciprocal trust, burnout, and intentions to quit.

## **Methods**

### **Participants**

A total of 3,688 respondents spread across 18 market sectors completed the survey. Participants were recruited through the use of Amazon's MechanicalTurk (MTurk) website. Data collection was completed during two time frames: January 14-15, 2015 and January 19-27, 2015. Participants were excluded from the survey if they did not reside within the United States or Canada and did not work for an organization with more than ten employees. Each participant who successfully completed the full survey was compensated \$0.65 USD through MTurk's compensation system.

### **Procedures**

MTurk acts as a crowd-sourcing platform for projects such as research, data-mining, or other high-volume, low-reward tasks. MTurk's suitability for academic research was explored and found to be adequate with scale reliabilities comparable to normal data collection methods and a demographically diverse participant pool (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011). MTurk offers functionality in selecting a research pool.

Data collection was completed in a partnership between Work Effects, Inc. and this researcher. Work Effects, Inc. is a regional consulting firm specializing in organizational health and culture. Their proprietary Organizational Health survey was used in addition to a measure of burnout. A single item that stated, "Please mark 'Don't Know / Does Not Apply' for this question" was inserted in a randomized location within the survey in an effort to prevent participants from responding randomly or not reading the survey items completely. Individuals who responded inappropriately to this item were removed from the data set. This resulted in a total of 766 respondents of the original 3,688 being removed from the sample.



Due to limitations in the survey design platform, all measures were administered on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree, 6 = Don't Know/Does Not Apply). Participants who selected a '6' on any of the questions within the Oldenburg's Burnout Inventory, individual trust, or organizational trust subscales were excluded from analysis. Following data cleaning, a total of 2,922 participants remained in the data sample.

## Measures

**Burnout.** Burnout was measured using Oldenburg's Burnout Inventory (OLBI). The OLBI has two subscales measuring both exhaustion and disengagement, each with 8 items for a total of 16 items. The OLBI was chosen as it is a well-demonstrated alternative to the primary method of measuring burnout through Maslach's Burnout Inventory. The OLBI scale has shown support for the two-factor model of burnout and adequate internal consistency, with alpha scores between .74-.87, in a recent validation study of the measure (Halbesleben & Demerouti, 2005). Alpha scale reliability of the whole scale for this sample was  $\alpha=.894$  (Disengagement  $\alpha=.881$ , Exhaustion  $\alpha=.838$ ).

**Individual Trust.** An individual's trust in their organization (IT) was measured using a five item subscale within Work Effects, Inc.'s proprietary survey. The scale reliability within this sample was  $\alpha=.840$ . An example item is, "My organization is truthful in all interactions and communications." These five items were then summed to give a subscale total with a higher value indicating more individual trust in their organization.

**Organizational Trust.** The individual's perceived organizational level of trust (OT) was similarly measured using a five item subscale within Work Effects, Inc.'s proprietary Organizational Health survey. The alpha within this sample was  $\alpha=.896$ . Inter-item correlations were below  $r=.70$ , with the exception of two items, suggesting unique variance may be gained

from each question. An example item is, “My manager regularly asks for my input on important decisions.” These five items were summed to give a subscale total with a higher value indicating perceptions of a more trusting organization.

**Intention to Quit.** Intention to quit (ITQ) was measured using a single-item approach on a 5-point Likert scale. Single-item measures have been shown to have similar predictive validity as multiple-item measures when there is a definable and concrete construct being measured (Bergkvist, & Rossiter, 2007). This approach has been used in the research and presents a valid and parsimonious method of understanding certain constructs (Wanous, Reichers, & Hudy, 1997). The item used was, “I have seriously considered leaving my organization in the last 12 months.” In an effort to not limit statistical analysis options, this question was asked on the same 6-point Likert-type scale rather than a dichotomous ‘Yes’ or ‘No’.

## **Results**

### **Preliminary Analyses**

Preliminary data analysis consisted of descriptive statistics for all variables as well as scale reliabilities. This information may be found in Table 1. All measures were reliable and data was normally distributed for measures of disengagement and exhaustion while measures of individual trust and perceived organizational trust demonstrated a minor negative skew. Additionally, principal component analyses were run on the OLBI as well as the Individual Trust and Organizational Trust subscales, seen in Table 2 and Table 3. The IT subscale had two items which cross loaded to the OT subscale but was otherwise distinct. A principal component analysis on the OLBI identified one disengagement item cross loading on the exhaustion subscale. Although there was minor evidence of cross-loading between this item, the scale

reliability was sufficiently high and the OLBI is a well-established measure of the two-factor structure of burnout.

Table 1. *Means, standard deviations, and scale reliabilities of variables*

Scale	Mean	S.D.	Exhaustion	Disengagement	IT	OT	ITQ
Exhaustion	2.67	0.79	<b>.839</b>				
Disengagement	2.98	0.93	.530**	<b>.882</b>			
IT	3.76	0.97	-.452**	-.635**	<b>.904</b>		
OT	3.69	0.90	-.480**	-.624**	.686**	<b>.848</b>	
ITQ	3.03	1.55	.487**	.585**	-.494**	-.417**	---

\*\* Correlation significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Bold denotes Cronbach's Alpha values

Table 2. *Principle Components Analysis Factor Loadings for Individual and Organizational Trust*

	Factor 1	Factor 2
Trusted Organization 1	.808	
Trusted Organization 2	.830	
Trusted Organization 3	.752	.340
Trusted Organization 4	.797	.300
Trusted Organization 5	.804	.333
Trusted Individual 1		.785
Trusted Individual 2	.323	.701
Trusted Individual 3	.498	.668
Trusted Individual 4		.764
Trusted Individual 5	.489	.664

Table 3. *Principle Components Analysis Factor Loadings for the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory*

	Factor 1	Factor 2
Disengagement 1		.813
Disengagement 2	.591	.434
Disengagement 3	.384	.492
Disengagement 4		.822
Disengagement 5	.355	.534
Disengagement 6		.787
Disengagement 7		.736
Disengagement 8		.866
Exhaustion 1	.475	
Exhaustion 2	.725	
Exhaustion 3	.565	
Exhaustion 4	.783	
Exhaustion 5	.582	
Exhaustion 6	.717	
Exhaustion 7	.789	
Exhaustion 8	.566	

### Test of Hypotheses

An individual's trust in their organization was negatively related to intentions to quit ( $r = -.494, p < .001$ ) as was an individual's perceived level of organizational trust ( $r = -.417, p < .001$ ), providing support for hypothesis one. Individual trust was negatively related to both the exhaustion subscale ( $r = -.452, p < .001$ ) and the disengagement subscale ( $r = -.635, p < .001$ ) of the OLBI. Organizational trust was similarly shown to be negatively related to the exhaustion ( $r = -.480, p < .001$ ) and disengagement ( $r = -.624, p < .001$ ) subscales. These relationships provide support for hypothesis two. The relationship between burnout and intentions to quit was established with both exhaustion ( $r = .487, p < .001$ ) and disengagement ( $r = .585, p < .001$ ) showing a strong correlation in the direction of hypothesis three.

The moderating effect of an individual's trust in the organization on the relationship between burnout and intentions to quit was tested using hierarchical regression. The variables were centered to allow for interpretation of main effects in addition to the interaction. Individual

trust ( $\beta = -.344, p < .001$ ) and exhaustion ( $\beta = .331, p < .001$ ) significantly predicted intentions to quit ( $R^2 = .331$ ). The significant interaction term ( $\beta = .096, p < .001$ ) provided support for an individual's trust in their organization acting as a moderator (see Figure 2). However, the addition of the moderator to the model provided little additional variance ( $\Delta R^2 = .009, p < .001$ ) indicating this moderating effect may be weak. Individual trust ( $\beta = -.206, p < .001$ ) and disengagement ( $\beta = .454, p < .001$ ) predicted intentions to quit ( $R^2 = .368$ ). The interaction between individual trust and disengagement was not significant and added no significant additional variance.

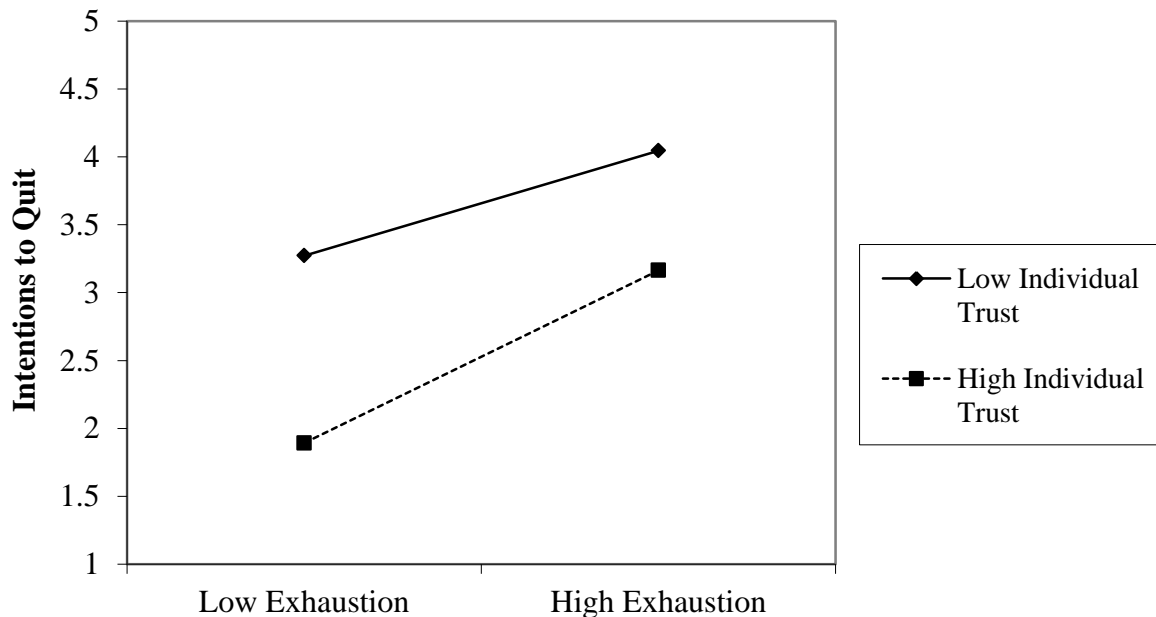


Figure 2. Interaction between individual trust, exhaustion, and intentions to quit.

Perceived organizational trust was examined as a moderator using the same hierarchical regression procedure. Both organizational trust ( $\beta = -.238, p < .001$ ) and exhaustion ( $\beta = .372, p < .001$ ) predicted intentions to quit ( $R^2 = .280, p < .001$ ). The interaction term ( $\beta = .081, p < .001$ ) was shown to add a significant amount of variance to the model ( $\Delta R^2 = .006, p < .001$ ) but demonstrates a weak moderating effect (see Figure 3). Organizational trust was once again a significant predictor ( $\beta = -.085, p < .001$ ) as was disengagement ( $\beta = .532, p < .001$ ) of intentions to

quit ( $R^2=.346, p<.001$ ). The interaction between perceived organizational trust and disengagement was not significant and added no significant variance. However, examining the nature of the interaction revealed a relationship counter to the hypothesized interaction. Therefore, although evidence for moderation of individual and organizational trust exists, it was not in the hypothesized direction, and so there was no support for hypotheses 4a and 4b regarding the moderating role of trust in the relationship between burnout and intentions to quit.

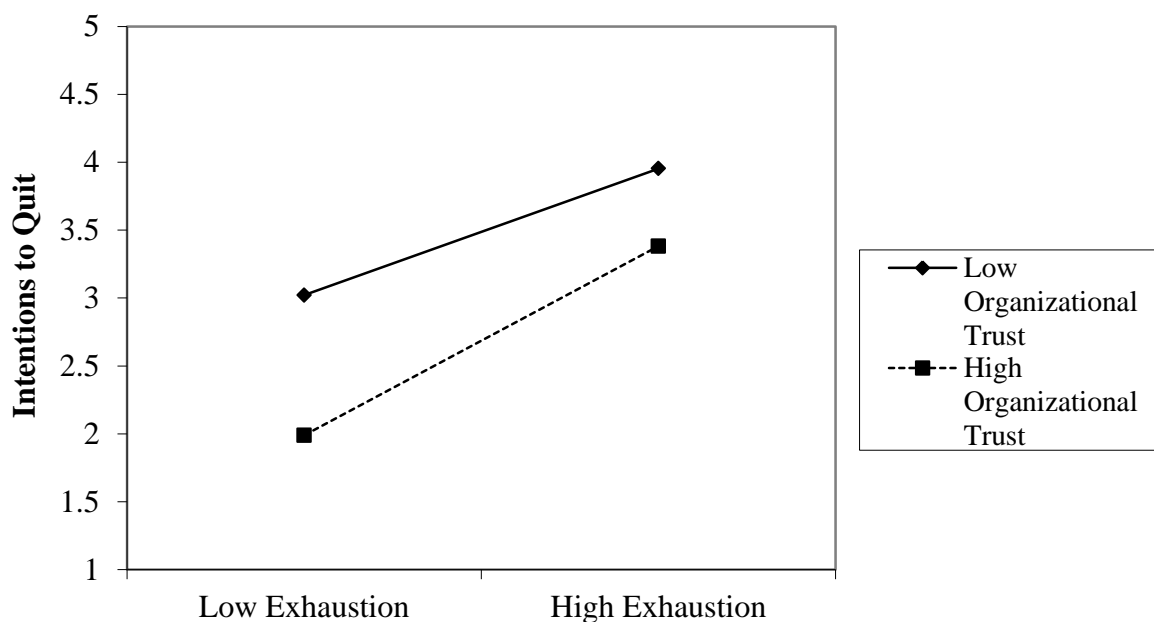


Figure 3. Interaction between perceived organizational trust, exhaustion, and intentions to quit.

To examine reciprocal trust, individuals were categorized as low- or high trust using a median split; this step was completed for both an individual's trust in their organization and for the perceived levels of organizational trust. Participants who reported high levels of both types of trust were classified as reciprocal trust while individuals reporting high levels of one but not the other trust were classified as unidirectional. Low scores on both measures of trust were classified as low trust and were considered the reference group for the purposes of examining potential

moderation. A hierarchical regression was conducted to look for evidence of moderation between the different classifications of trust.

Whether an individual reported unidirectional trust ( $\beta = -.137, p < .001$ ) or reciprocal trust ( $\beta = -.298, p < .001$ ) and exhaustion ( $\beta = .365, p < .001$ ) all significantly predicted intentions to quit ( $R^2 = .298, p < .001$ ). The interaction term for unidirectional trust and exhaustion was not significant while the reciprocal trust x exhaustion term was significant ( $\beta = .053, p < .05$ ). However, adding the interactions to the model explained an insignificant amount of additional variance, suggesting a weak interaction at best. Following the same procedure, unidirectional trust ( $\beta = -.088, p < .001$ ), reciprocal trust ( $\beta = -.162, p < .001$ ), and disengagement ( $\beta = .498, p < .001$ ) significantly predicted intentions to quit. Unidirectional trust showed no significant interaction with disengagement once again while reciprocal trust demonstrated a significant interaction ( $\beta = -.062, p < .05$ ) with disengagement (see Figure 4). The interaction added a small but statistically significant amount of variance to the model ( $\Delta R^2 = .002, p < .05$ ). The significance of the reciprocal nature of trust acting as a moderator for both the disengagement and exhaustion subscales of burnout provides partial support for hypothesis five.

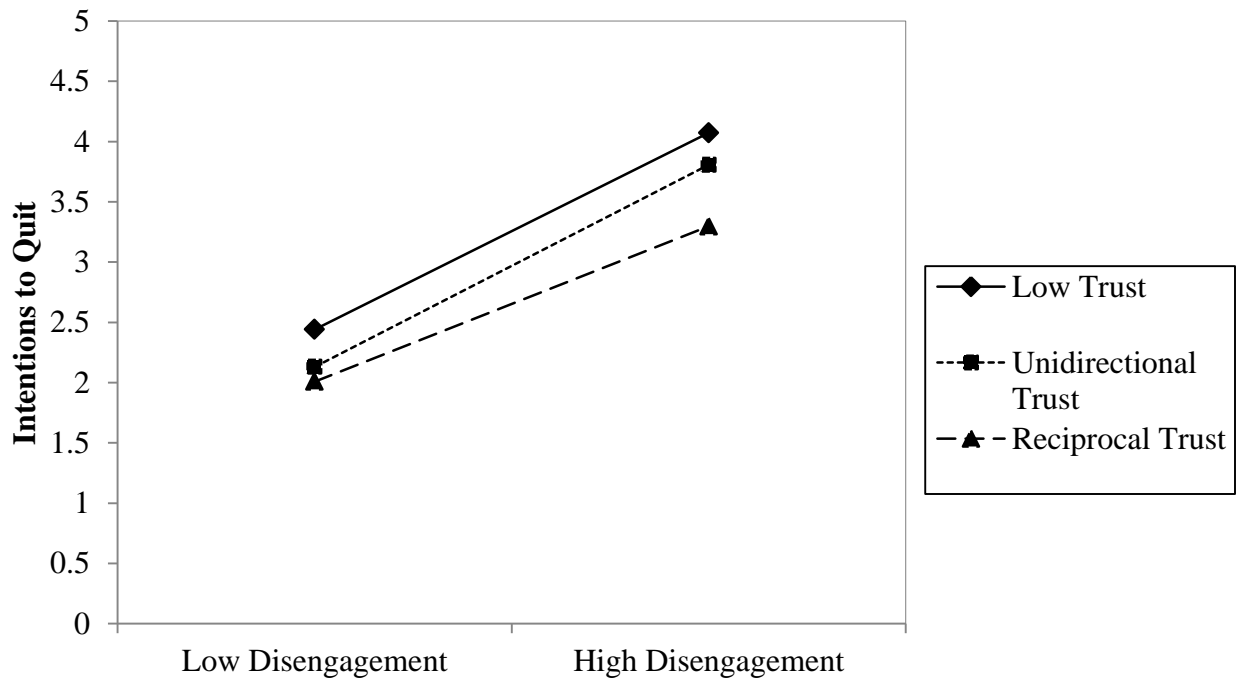


Figure 4. Interaction between levels of trust, disengagement, and intentions to quit.

### Additional Analyses

A one-way ANOVA indicated a significant difference in intentions to quit by levels of trust ; however, as Levene's test was significant ( $p=.002$ ), the Welch statistic was used,  $F(3,915.673)=236.312, p<.001$ . A Games-Howell post-hoc identified significant differences between all group means, which may be seen in Figure 5. A one-way ANOVA also indicated a significant difference in exhaustion by levels of trust. Once again, Levene's test was significant ( $p=.034$ ) and so the Welch statistic was used,  $F(3,925.054)=238.736, p<.001$ . An additional one-way ANOVA identified a significant difference in disengagement by levels of trust. As before, the Welch statistic was used  $F(3,939.877)=477.779, p<.001$  as Levene's test was significant ( $p<.001$ ). Additional Games-Howell post-hocs were conducted and revealed significant differences between all groups except between the two forms of unidirectional trust (see Figures 6 and 7).



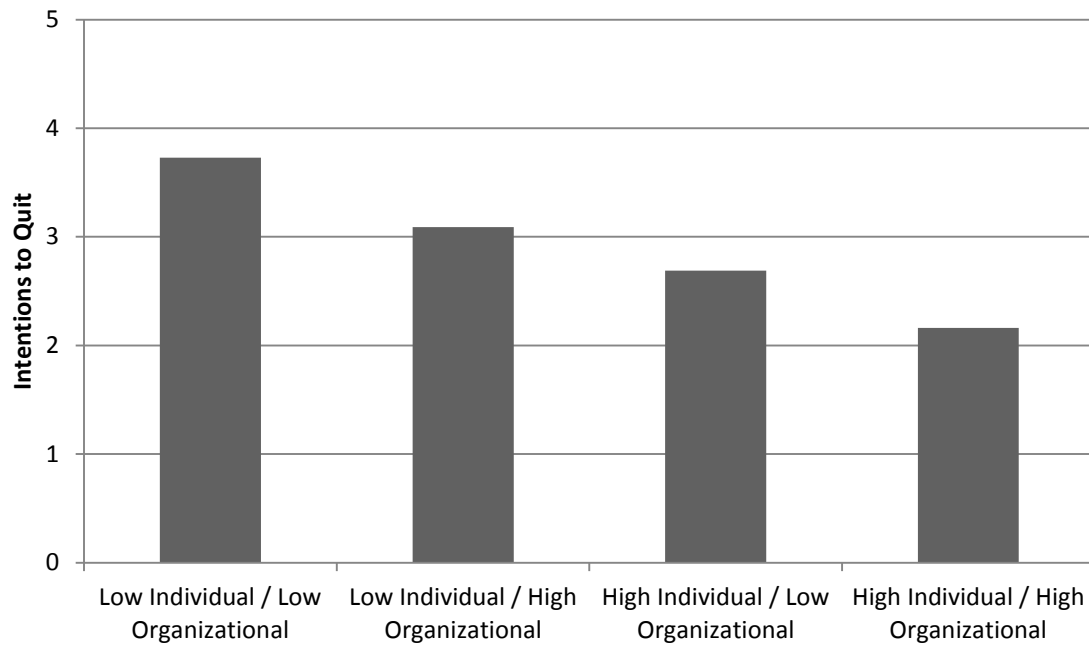


Figure 5. Group means by trust level for intentions to quit.

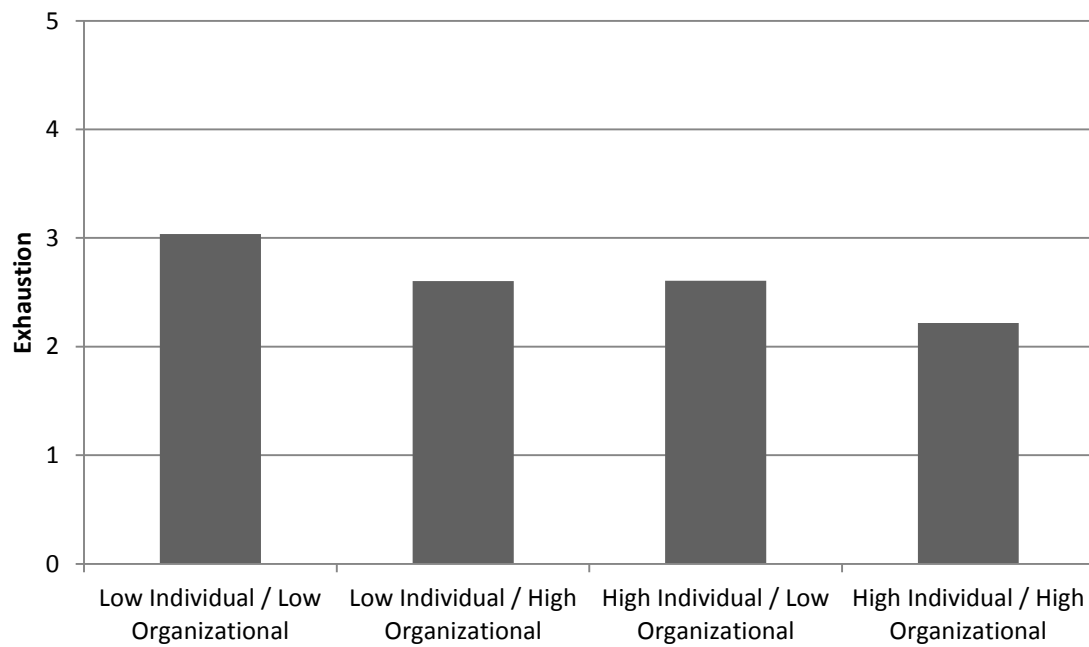


Figure 6. Group means by trust level for exhaustion.

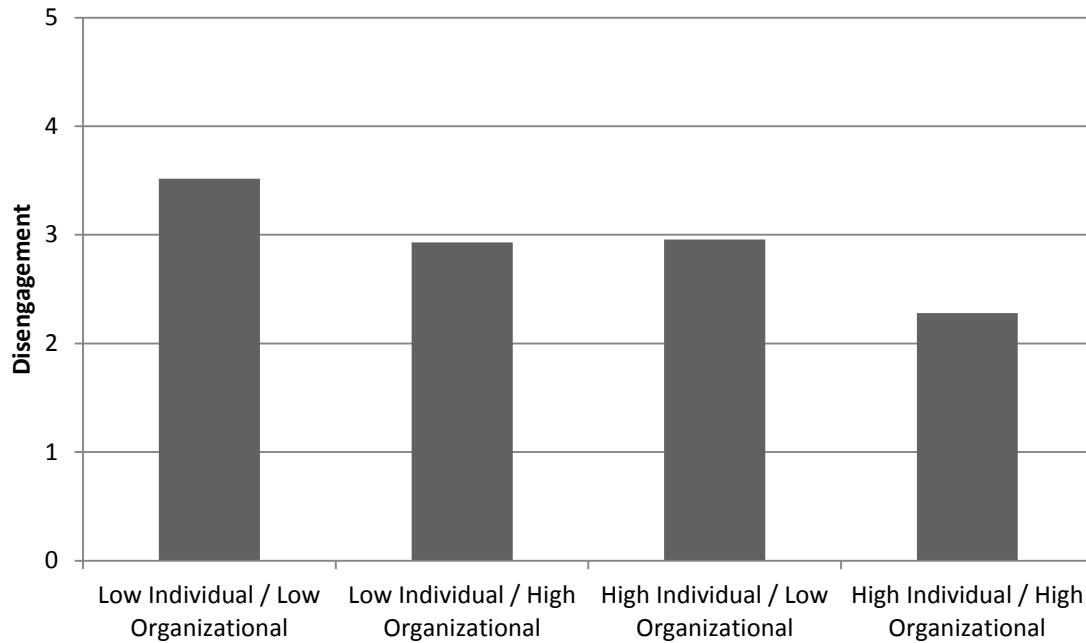


Figure 7. Group means by trust level for disengagement.

### Discussion

The purpose of the current study was to identify the potential moderating ability of trust within an organizational setting in regards to the relationship between burnout and turnover intentions. The consideration of individual and organizational trust as a potential moderator of this relationship was partially supported. An individual's trust in their organization moderated the relationship between the exhaustion component of burnout and intentions to quit but not for the disengagement component. An identical pattern was observed for an individual's perceived level of organizational trust (i.e., whether or not they perceived that their organization trusted them). However, the observed interaction was not in the hypothesized manner. High trust individuals demonstrated a stronger positive relationship between burnout and intentions to quit than low trust individuals. Although the moderating effect of trust was weak, the main effects were robust and consistent with past research.

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model suggests that burnout develops from the result of over-taxation of employees' resources leading to withdrawal behaviors (disengagement) which also inhibits the meeting of their job demands (exhaustion) (Demerouti et al., 2001). Burnout, therefore, may be identified in individuals with high job demands and/or low resources. As defined by Demerouti et al. (2001), a resource is a "physical, psychological, social or organizational aspect of the job that may be functional in achieving work goals...or reducing job demands (pg. 501)." Given this definition, it is easy to see how trust within an organizational setting may help achieve work goals and reduce job demands. Individuals possessing these components of trust have an additional resource to combat negative outcomes (e.g. intentions to quit) that their low trust peers do not. If an individual's trust in their organization and that individual's perceptions regarding the level of trust they receive from their organization do, in fact, act as a resource, this may explain the strong negative relationship between trust and the disengagement component of burnout (Demerouti et al., 2001). Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) found that job resources were not only related to the disengagement component but also to the exhaustion component of burnout, which is consistent with the slightly weaker but still robust negative relationship observed between trust and exhaustion observed in this study.

Consistent with past research, both individual and perceived organizational trust demonstrated significant negative relationships with intentions to quit (Batchelor, 2013; Fruend, 2014; Hansen et al., 2011). An individual's trust in their organization seemed to hold more sway than perceived organizational trust did regarding intentions to quit. Regardless of the level of perceived organizational trust, moving from low to high individual trust significantly reduced intentions to quit. Significant differences in exhaustion and disengagement were also observed across categories of individual and perceived organizational trust (see Figure 3 and Figure 4).

The most substantial differences arose between low trust and reciprocal trust groups; however, an interesting pattern was observed for both subscales of burnout with the two forms of unidirectional trust showing similar levels of burnout.

The similarities in exhaustion and disengagement group means between the two different types of unidirectional trust may be explained by theories of inequity. Past research has shown that feelings of inequity within a social exchange relationship may be associated with burnout (Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004). In this case, individuals are giving and receiving disparate amounts of trust within their organization, giving rise to these feelings of inequity. Given these findings, the suggestion by Allisey et al. (2014) that organizations monitor stress levels in an effort to improve employee retention efforts should be modified to include trust-monitoring efforts, as well. Organizations should be mindful of employee trust and work to ensure equitable trust exchanges in order to benefit from lower employee burnout and decreased turnover intentions.

This study was an answer to the call to action by Brower et al. (2009) regarding the need for increased research surrounding the dyadic nature of organizational trust and its effects. Contrary to Brower et al. (2009), reciprocal trust was found to show significant relationships with employees' intentions to quit. Individuals classified as experiencing reciprocal trust showed lower intentions to quit than unidirectional- and low-trust individuals given equal exhaustion or disengagement. However, the practical significance of this relationship remains to be seen as the additional variance added to the model by the inclusion of the moderator is miniscule.

The weak interaction detected by this research may be confounded due to the high correlation between the two trust subscales ( $r=.686, p<.001$ ). This strong relationship suggests that the two variables as measured may not be entirely distinct constructs. It is interesting to note

that both individual trust and organizational trust independently moderated the relationship between the exhaustion component of burnout and intentions to quit while reciprocal trust moderated the relationship between disengagement, but not exhaustion, and intentions to quit. It is possible that high levels of an individual's trust in their organization and high levels of perceived organizational trust combine to create a positive environment which acts to inhibit the harmful effects of disengagement. Additional support for this assertion may be found in the JD-R model's contention that resources (e.g. environments of reciprocal trust) are integrally tied to the disengagement component of burnout.

This study's findings are potentially generalizable to the U.S. workforce as a whole. The sample was sufficiently broad, encompassing 18 distinct business groups. Additionally, the measures used were not industry specific allowing for interpretation to be made independent of context.

### **Limitations**

As previously stated, the subscales used to evaluate an individual's trust in their organization and the individual's perceived organizational trust were highly correlated with each other. Consequently, an individual scoring high on one subscale is likely to score high on the other subscale, thereby potentially inflating the proportion of individuals classified in the category of reciprocal trust. This effect would also serve to potentially increase the proportion of low trust individuals as they are operationally defined as low on both subscales of trust. This increased representation on the low- and high- ends of the trust spectrum could artificially impact the interaction between trust, burnout, and intentions to quit. Additionally, this high inter-subscale correlation may impact the frequency with which individuals are classified within the unidirectional trust categories, thereby serving to further obfuscate potential relationships among

the variables. Given the high inter-subscale correlation between the two trust variables, it is possible that we are not fully measuring and understanding nuanced but potentially distinct differences between the two unidirectional trust categories. Instead, perhaps conceptually we are measuring varying levels of trust (i.e. low-, medium-, and high-trust) rather than the nuances between low trust, unidirectional trust, and reciprocal trust.

Although not a limitation in the strictest sense, the large sample size used for this research provided unnecessarily large statistical power. This large power helped identify statistically significant interactions among the variables. However, careful consideration should be taken when interpreting the results as a distinction must be made between statistical significance and practical significance. Additional research is needed to clarify the practical significance of trust as a moderator between burnout and intentions to quit.

### **Future Directions**

More research is needed to better understand the dyadic nature of trust within an organizational setting. Compelling evidence exists for why organizations should care about how much their employees trust and feel trusted by the organization but there may be considerable overlap between these two constructs. Future research should work to better define and delineate reciprocal trust to aid in its measurement.

Recent research into emergent states has opened new possibilities for trust research within organizational settings. Considering trust as an emergent state (i.e. both an input and an outcome) serves to both open the door to new research and muddy the waters when trying to operationally define trust within an organizational setting (Coultras, Driskell, Burke, & Salas, 2014; Marks, Mathieu, & Zaccaro, 2001). It may be inappropriate to consider trust purely as present or not present at a given time period but instead consider trust as a fluid concept capable

of changing over time. A longitudinally designed study within an organization would allow researchers to consider changes in trust levels (e.g. development or extinction of trust) over time and the resulting impact on outcomes.

An additional area of potential research revolves around the classification of individuals within the four categories of trust: low trust, low individual / high organizational, high individual / low organizational, and reciprocal trust. Identifying key organizational characteristics, individual differences and demographic variables between the groups could serve to aid in crossing the researcher/practitioner divide. Better understanding of the work situations and the differences among the individuals that fall within each category would allow for improved design of organizational interventions designed to build trust.

Fortunately for researchers, the world of occupational trust research is teeming with possibilities, especially once trust is considered outside of the typical mono-dimensional and mono-directional construct. Within occupational settings, promoting and enhancing trust shows potential to be a valuable tool in a practitioner's toolkit to improve individual and organizational outcomes.

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